

The Personnel Exchange

Past Exchange Summary Reports

Initiating Agency:	Kansas State Department of Education
Cooperating Agency:	Kentucky Department of Education
Dates of Exchange:	January 24-25, 2000
Title of Exchange:	"Consolidated Plan" and Accompanying Technology

Three Kansas State Department of Education staff (Judi Miller, Steve Adams, and Sal Tayani) met with the following individuals on January 24 and 25, 2000, while conducting the Personnel Exchange visit with Kentucky officials:

- Joe Clark, Director
- Shirley LaFavers, Electronic Applications Security Administrator
- Cathy Thomas, Systems Consultant
- Martin Herbener, Programmer Analyst
- Robin Oatley, Director of Community Relations
- Pat Hurt, Principal Assistant
- David Allen, Branch Manager
- Judy Tabor, Coordinator of Regional Service Center Activities
- Diane Robinson, Title I Branch Manager

The first morning we learned about Kentucky's Consolidated Plan and the technology behind it. Kentucky is far ahead of Kansas in defining and assisting schools with web-based applications. Not only do they have their Consolidated Plan but also budget amendments are processed electronically. The purpose of the Consolidated Plan is to reduce the number of program applications and to provide a means for inputting and retrieving data. Their Consolidated Plan is very similar to the school improvement plans that Kansas's schools submit as part of the Quality Performance Accreditation process. The big difference is that Kansas still uses a paper process.

Kentucky has districts submit implementation and impact check forms electronically to evaluate, amend or update the Consolidated Plan. The process of communicating with districts via e-mail regarding the status of electronic applications or for raising questions certainly is convenient and expedient.

The State of Kentucky provides minimum standards for technology hardware, funding for technology and a certain number of e-mail accounts per district. In visiting with Kentucky staff, we learned how critical and important it is to have "help desks" to assist schools with the electronic process and troubleshoot problems. We realize the learning curve for many in the field is tremendous. Not only is staff development necessary but a user-friendly handbook is a must.

One of our concerns was security of documents submitted electronically. The Kentucky staff discussed how they assign passwords and user identification rights. Each district has security district administrators who oversee the security of the electronic applications. Another issue we raised was how they acquire signatures electronically. Kentucky requires districts to have a record of the Consolidated Plan being approved by the local Board of Education. Once that has happened, electronic assurances are acceptable.

We also discussed the statewide framework, the technology standards defined by the State and various problems encountered during the development and launching phases. The Department of Education contracted with other agencies for assistance with development. They had a project leader, two analysts and two programmers. they strongly recommend that sufficient time for piloting be provided.

We learned, also, how Kentucky funds and supports the use of technology. The Kentucky Department of Education works closely with the State's Department of Information System. This latter department manages the statewide technology network and provides certain levels of help desk.

Following the extensive review of the Consolidated Plan, we learned about the State assessment system. We were particularly interested in the process for assessing limited English proficient students. Students who have at least two full years in an English-speaking school are expected to take the State assessment. In many situations, accommodations are provided. This is an issue we are currently discussing in Kansas. Kentucky staff also shared with us the factors used for disaggregating data.

Following the discussion on assessments we moved to the topics of identifying low performing schools, scholastic audits and the distinguished educators' program. This was very timely for us as we are in the process of defining an Early Warning System for identifying low performing schools. Once schools are identified, we need to identify the types of technical assistance and possible consequences for these schools. The information obtained from the Kentucky staff will be helpful as we define the system for schools in Kansas. The scholastic audit tool and the training curriculum for distinguished educators will be particularly helpful. One of the big differences between Kentucky and the Kansas distinguished educators is the financial support. Kentucky provides State resources to develop a cadre of educators who work full time helping low performing schools. The financial support for this program is a key factor in finding highly qualified persons who are willing to participate in the program.

To finish our visit, we met with those who work with the regional service centers in Kentucky. It is a definite plus that the service centers are an extension of the Department of Education. This allows for regional assistance to schools. These service centers provide the training for the Consolidated Plans. The service centers are also actively involved in working with low performing schools and distinguished educators.

We certainly learned a lot from our visit with the Kentucky State Department of Education. As we move toward designed web-based applications, we'll incorporate much of the information learned into the process, i.e., training programs, security systems, help desk and design of forms.

The concept of communicating via e-mail is particularly interesting. We'll also consider their systems for identifying and working with low performing schools.

We thank CCSSO for the opportunity to visit Kentucky! It was a worthwhile venture for us. We surely appreciate the time that the Kentucky State Department of Education staff spent with us. They were willing to share and to answer our endless questions.

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